



# NEWS RELEASE

*from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

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**SERVICE ANNOUNCES "FLIGHT PLAN" FOR SONGBIRDS,  
HIGHLIGHTING INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY CELEBRATION**

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today unveiled a national strategy to stop the decline of songbirds and other migratory birds by coordinating conservation efforts at the local, state, and national level.

The announcement highlighted International Migratory Bird Day, an annual celebration of the northern spring migration of 340 species of migratory birds. The celebration features bird walks and other events open to the public at sites throughout the Americas.

"Three decades after Silent Spring first awakened us to threats to songbirds, we finally have a blueprint that will allow everyone involved in the conservation of migratory birds to work together toward common goals," said Mollie Beattie, the Service's director.

The North American Bird Conservation Strategy, dubbed the "Flight Plan," was developed under the auspices of "Partners in Flight," a partnership of 16 Federal agencies; 60 state and provincial fish and wildlife agencies; and 60 non-government organizations including conservation groups, philanthropic foundations, and academic, professional, and industry groups.

Under the Flight Plan, teams of biologists will identify and rank bird species most in need of conservation and then set population and habitat objectives for each species. They also will designate geographic areas critical to migratory birds and develop a blueprint for conserving each species.

The various partners in Partners in Flight will use the blueprint to guide their own conservation projects and to work with landowners, birding clubs, and other groups that want to voluntarily restore or conserve songbird habitat.

For example, the plan will provide interested landowners with management guidance to increase and maintain bird populations on their property in coordination with other landowners in their region.

"Partners in Flight has done a lot to conserve songbirds, but the Flight Plan provides the framework for much more," said Amos S. Eno, executive director of the National Fish and Wildlife

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Foundation. "If we are going to stem the decline of many species, we can no longer afford this catch-as-catch-can approach; we have to have a Flight Plan."

The Flight Plan is entirely voluntary and creates no new government regulations or programs. In its initial implementation, the plan will be limited to the United States. However, it lays the groundwork for increased international cooperation for the protection of all birds throughout the hemisphere.

International Migratory Bird Day celebrates the joys of bird watching, one of the most popular hobbies in the United States. The annual event, held on the second Saturday in May, features hundreds of events at national wildlife refuges, city and state parks, national forests, national parks, National Audubon Society sites, and other nature reserves.

The 65 million adults who participate in bird watching spend from \$5 billion to \$9 billion a year on everything from bird seed to birding trips, according to a 1995 study commissioned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

But even as bird watching has grown in popularity, many songbird populations have declined sharply in recent years. These include species such as the Kirtland's warbler, the black-capped vireo, the cerulean warbler, and the mountain plover. Some species are declining as fast as 2 percent to 4 percent a year.

Biologists believe loss of habitat throughout the Western Hemisphere is the major reason for this decline. For example, the United States has lost more than half its wetlands, nearly all its tallgrass prairie, 75 percent of shortgrass prairie, and almost all of its virgin forest.

Partners in Flight was created in 1990 to better focus limited conservation resources on the monitoring, research, management, and education programs of declining migratory bird species.

"Many birds travel over dozens of countries, states, and provinces in the course of a year-long migratory cycle," said Beattie. "To be effective, there must be a strong, coordinated conservation program every place they go."

For an information packet on International Migratory Bird Day, Partners in Flight, or the strategic plan, write: International Migratory Bird Day, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Room 634, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203.



## FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

# Facts

U.S. Department of the Interior

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### FUN FACTS ABOUT SONGBIRDS

- o Several major-league sports teams have avian names and mascots, three of them songbirds: Baltimore Orioles, Phoenix Cardinals, and Toronto Blue Jays. The others are Atlanta Falcons, Atlanta Hawks, Baltimore Ravens, Philadelphia Eagles, Pittsburgh Penguins, Seattle Seahawks, and Toronto Raptors.
- o Seven states chose the cardinal as their state bird, six chose the meadowlark, and five the mockingbird.
- o Folk wisdom holds that if you see a robin head for its nest, particularly if no eggs or young are present, batten down the hatches for a storm. The robin's nest, which they sometimes re-use from year to year, contains a large percentage of mud. It would be destroyed in a storm if not protected.
- o The nest of the American goldfinch is so thick-walled it will hold water. Untended nestlings have been known to drown in the nest during rainstorms.
- o At rest, the ruby-throated hummingbird's heart beats 615 times per minute. The crow's resting heart rate is 342 beats per minute and the turkey's is 93 beats per minute.
- o The cardinal weighs 10 times more than the ruby-throated hummingbird (40 grams and 4 grams, respectively).
- o If you hold a mammal and a bird of approximately the same size, the bird will weigh much less because the bones of most birds are porous; many are filled with air rather than marrow and are connected to the respiratory system.
- o Young bluebirds hatched early in the season help their parents feed, clean, and care for late-season broods.
- o The world's first monument to a songbird was dedicated in Mio, Michigan July 27, 1963. It features a 4-foot-high statue of a Kirtland's warbler, one of the rarest of North America's warblers. Mio is located in the heart of Kirtland warbler nesting range.
- o Properly reclaimed strip mines can provide excellent habitat for grassland birds.
- o On September 18, 1492, Columbus noticed flocks of songbirds flying south. He changed course to follow the birds, probably golden plovers, making land on October 12, 1492.